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26 March 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: Project Director

THROUGH : Deputy Project Director

SUBJECT : Screening of Contract Employees for Future AQUATONE Operations

1. I do not think it too early to suggest that we consider what disposition we wish to make of contract pilot personnel of each of our overseas bases as they are phased out, presumably at the completion of their eighteen month overseas tours of duty.

2. Assuming, for example, that Base A is decommissioned (at least personnel if not actual facility) on or about 1 November 1957, we will then have to decide about continuing the seven pilots there who would become surplus to the Project, even though they might have a few months remaining on their two-year contracts, for which most of them signed up in January of 1956.

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3. Some will undoubtedly plan to return to the Air Force at this time, but I feel, as does [REDACTED] that there may well be others who would prefer to continue in our employ in whatever form might be appropriate.

4. I make no brief for active proselyting of these pilots, for whose services we made complicated arrangements with the Air Force, but if CIA is to hold title to a number of the primary mission aircraft, and is to operate them under a guise other than the present one, it seems better to plan now to have our present pilots fly them rather than to train a new cadre to do the job. I assume that the Air Force would be willing to extend the principle of their loan arrangement to cover such pilots as we might desire to continue.

5. Consequently, I would hope that we could assure ourselves that those pilots we did retain would be the best of the lot available to us. Do you feel that there is any merit to a plan which might have the net effect of distilling our pilots down as the number of AQUATONE bases decreases, until the last base of the three has the residual of the pilots now employed, and this distilled product represents the best skilled, those most experienced in the U-2?

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6. In Section C.9 of Annex G to Base A's Operations Order, we have established that Headquarters may call on the Detachment Commander for periodic Fitness Reports on the contract employees. I would suggest that we ask [REDACTED] for such reports, and that subsequently we do the same for the other units. These reports should also cover what is known

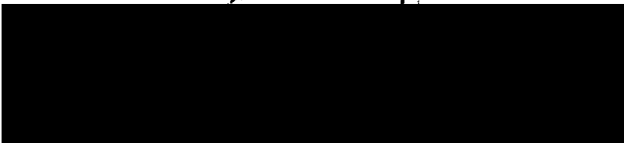
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of the pilot's technical proficiency, as attested to by the findings of the Senior Operations Officer and his staff. This would be a first step toward identifying the most valuable pilots and determining where their interests lie, especially about returning to the Air Force next fall or at the expiration of their two-year contract period.



7. My sole reason for advancing the framework of such a proposal is to stimulate our thoughts on this matter and to see that we do not inadvertently deprive ourselves of the services of some really excellent pilots while retaining some of lesser caliber. I realize that to plan in this direction is to purchase the premise that by distilling the pilots we may have to "buy up" the remainder of any contracts covering pilots who might be involuntarily eliminated through any such screening as I have suggested. However, funds spent in this direction would be small compared to the cost of a single premature aircraft accident.

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Project Director of Administration  
PCS/DCI

JAC/slh

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